



PERSPECTIVES IN PARENTING

April 2004

HELPING CHILDREN EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTAND FEELINGS

Children who are allowed to feel their feelings, and helped by their parents to identify their feelings and learn from them, are learning the skills to deal with life in a responsible way. Feelings in children that are suppressed, express themselves in a wide variety of misbehaviors. Some of the ways which we as parents unknowingly stop feelings in children are:

RESCUING:	"You don't worry about it anymore."
PUNISHING:	"It's your fault. Go to time out!"
SOLVING THE PROBLEM:	"Why don't you just cheer up, we'll go out for ice cream and you won't have to think about it anymore."
MORALIZING:	"How could you be so irresponsible! I didn't do that at your age- I would never have let something like this happen!"
DENIAL:	"You shouldn't feel guilty, it wasn't your fault!"
HUMILIATING:	"I can't believe you let this happen! How could you do this? I'm so ashamed of you."
PITYING:	"Oh, honey, that bad kid, she shouldn't be picking on you like that and scaring you!"
LECTURING:	"From now on young man, you are going to be more careful. I want you to always check before...."

While our intention is to teach our child a lesson in the above examples, our results are often much different. The child focuses on how unfair we are, or how bad they are, rather than learning from their mistake. If we want our child to learn, it is critical that we address the feelings first and then work with them on dealing with the situation. Some ways to encourage feelings are:

BE EMPATHETIC:	"I understand how you are feeling, I have felt that too."
VALIDATE FEELINGS:	"You have a right to feel that way. If it happened to me, I probably would feel the same way."
IDENTIFY FEELINGS:	"Sounds like you feel ____." or "That must feel ____." "Is that right?"
LISTEN INTENTLY:	Make direct eye contact and listen for what is going on in her life. Listen as if it were your best friend talking to you.
BE CURIOUS:	"Hmm, I want to know more about how you are feeling about that."
AFFIRM FEELINGS:	"You're feeling really sad!" or "I can see how angry you are!"
INVITE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS:	"Tell me more. I want to know how you feel." "I'm on your side."

When you build closeness in your relationship this way, you will find that you have much greater influence in your child's thoughts and decisions, and they will begin to ask you what you think!

Adapted from *Redirecting Children's Behaviors*"

Alexandria Community
Services Board
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The Alexandria Community Services Board is a group of 16 citizen volunteers appointed by the Alexandria City Council. Board policies and programs are implemented and managed by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse. It is a Board policy not to discriminate in the admission to its programs and activities on the basis of race, gender, handicap, religion, or national and ethnic origin. Please contact us if you require special accommodations, have any questions or complaints.



Taking the Message Home

RECOMMENDED READING

The Way I Feel

by Janan Cain (Illustrator)



Through simple verses and engaging illustrations, *The Way I Feel* gives children the vocabulary they need to understand and express how they feel.

Hands Are Not for Hitting

by Martine Agassi Ph.D., Marieka Heinlen (Illustrator)



This title offers youngsters an alternative to hitting and other forms of hurtful behavior, guiding them to a more peaceful and positive outcome in their dealings with other children. The refrain that "hands are not for hitting" is accompanied by numerous better uses for them, such as waving, helping, drawing, and making music.

Let's Talk About Needing Attention

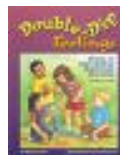
by Joy Wilt Berry, Maggie Smith (Illustrator), Bonnie Bader (Editor)



Whining, crying, and throwing tantrums to get attention, Casey comes to know that there are other, more positive ways to get attention and learns the difference between good attention and bad attention.

Double-Dip Feelings: Stories to Help Children Understand Emotions

by Barbara S. Cain, Anne Patterson (Illustrator)



Discusses how natural it is to feel contradictory emotions. Presents situations, such as the first day of school, the birth of a sibling, or a move to a new house, and identifies two emotions each event is likely to elicit.

Proud of Our Feelings

by Lindsay Leghorn (Illustrator)



A variety of multiethnic youngsters express friendliness, sadness, happiness, silliness, anger, confidence, frustration, loneliness, excitement, fear, and security.

RECOGNIZE

Use your child's body language and what has been verbally shared to understand what he/she is feeling.

ACKNOWLEDGE

When the feeling has been identified, let your child know that you can see what he/she is feeling. Help them use their words to communicate their emotions and needs.

RESPOND

Engage your child in a way to make him/herself feel better. How can he/she problem solve through emotional dilemmas, and self-soothe regardless of whether someone



PARENT WORKSHOPS

☺ "Problem Solving with Children"

Teddy Bear Essex Thurs., April 1st, 5 pm

☺ "Learning Through Play"

Happy Home I Thurs., April 8th, 5 pm

☺ "I'm so Angry: Calm Down Steps & Problem Solving"

Happy Home II Thurs., April 22nd, 5 pm

☺ "Brainstorming"

NW Birchmere Tues., April 27th, 5 pm



PARENT DINNER THEATERS

☺ "Creating Quality Time & Opportunities for Kids"

ALIVE! Wed., April 21st, 5 pm

☺ "When Adults Argue: Creating Healthy Boundaries"

Almost Home Tues., April 6th, 5 pm

Teddy Bear Hamlet Wed., April 7th, 5 pm

NW Charles Houston Tues., April 20th, 5 pm